

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

November 15, 2015

rocwisconsin.org
WISDOM Will Not Give Up

WISDOM has been fighting very hard for several years to force the state bureaucrats running the criminal justice system to reform the prison system and release old-law prisoners who no longer pose a threat to anyone. The 11 X 15 campaign will be expiring soon without reaching its goal of reducing the prison population to 11,000 by 2015. In fact, it has not reduced the prison population at all.

But the folks at WISDOM are undaunted. They have embarked on a new campaign with renewed resolve. rocwisconsin.org is their new website ("roc" stands for Restore Our Communities). They printed a book called "It's Time to Fix Our Broken Parole System." I submitted my story to them but I don't know if it was included in the book. I suggest that you go to the new website and read all about it.

Wisconsin is still warehousing thousands of old prisoners who no longer pose a risk to anyone. Many of them (including me) have been in prison for over 30 years. They are being denied release on parole based solely on Scott Walker's conservative political agenda. Any rational decision maker would have released these people years ago.

Consider my case. I have spent over 31 years in prison for stabbing a man in a fight - a man who outweighed me by 85 pounds, attacked me without provocation and trapped me in a dead end hallway. I have spent years on work release and drove a state van over 30,000 miles throughout northwestern Wisconsin. Since Scott Walker became governor, I've been held in a medium security prison and declared to be a risk to the public - in spite of being out in the community unsupervised for years.

Join WISDOM's campaign and restore sanity to Wisconsin's criminal justice system.

For all you excons out there who want to help WISDOM, there is now a group called EXPO, which stands for EX-Prisoners Organizing. Contact the WISDOM office to find out how you can help. (414) 831-2070

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

November 16, 2015

Who Does Wisconsin Belong To?

You would think that it is self-evident in a democracy that "we the people" are the ones in charge and that our government governs in the best interests of "we the people." But rarely are things that simple and they are certainly not so in this instance. I read an Op-Ed piece by Capitol Times Editor John Nichols, which was printed in the Wisconsin State Journal on October 25, 2015. It tells what things were like in 1890s Wisconsin - right before the Progressives, led by "Fighting Bob" La Follette, changed the course of this state.

I envy free-world people who can do research, marshal facts and present a compelling case for their position. Mr. Nichols draws parallels between then and now, highlighting how our government and democracy in Wisconsin have been hijacked by conservative Republican ideologues who have sold our state to the highest bidder.

The numerous policies I highlighted in a previous blog are firmly entrenching power in the hands of the wealthy and their minions. The only way Wisconsin citizens were able to wrest control from the "new dark power" of the 1890s was when moderate Republicans like LaFollette broke away from the stalwart Republicans and joined forces with the Democrats. Their combined power was enough to change the course of our state to one that protected its citizens and reined in the abuses of the robber barons.

I suspect that once again Democrats will be unable to stem the tide of the dark power on their own. Until enough moderate Republicans step up to say enough is enough, we are doomed to travel a downward spiral into 19th century conditions enforced with 21st century technology. We are facing a host of perils we have not faced in over a century.

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November 17, 2015

"Beloved, never avenge yourselves,
but leave room for the wrath of God;
for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine,
I will repay, says the Lord.'" Romans 12:19

This is an instruction to forgive those who harm you or do you wrong. We have all hurt someone at one time or another, and we have been hurt as well. The point is that if you seek to get even with someone and harm them, they will do the same to you. It is never-ending . . . unless someone chooses to forgive and let God decide when and how to exact vengeance on the wrongdoer.

This verse came to mind the other day when I heard that Ron Endres died of cancer. Ron was the person who lied under oath during my 1984 murder trial which sent me to prison for life. Had he told the truth, I would never have spent a day in prison.

I forgave him a long time ago and prayed that he would come to Christ before he died. I hoped that the Lord would heal his heart so that he would come forward to tell the truth and I'd be released from prison.

Well, from what I've been told, Ron died a painful death, his heart still filled with bitterness and hate. I wonder how many other relatives of Dick Endres have chosen the same path Ron chose: anger and bitterness instead of love and forgiveness. We all choose our path in life. Ron's path made him and everyone around him miserable. No obituary, no funeral, no burial. Just a quick cremation with no one to mourn his passing.

I feel no satisfaction in outliving him, take no pleasure in his death. I'm sorry he did not come to Christ before he died, but that's why God gave us all free will. He chose to hang onto his hatred and died a bitter man. I chose to forgive and to move on with my life.

Even though I spent the last 31 years in prison, which one of us do you think lived a better life? I thank God every day for all the blessings he has bestowed on me and all the love and support I have received from family and friends.